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taining and instructive Histories, every one of which is  
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# ARTAXERXES.

A N

## ENGLISH OPERA.

As it is Performed

At the THEATRE-ROYAL

I N

COVENT-GARDEN.

The Musick Compos'd by

THO. AUG. ARNE, Mus. Doc.

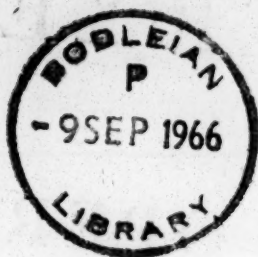
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D U B L I N:

Printed by JAMES HOEY, junior, in *Parliament-Street*, and D. CHAMBERLAINE, in *Dame-Street*.

MDCCLXIV.







# P R E F A C E.

*THE reputation of METASTASIO, author of the following drama, is too well established in the learned world, to need any apology for giving the publick a translation of Artaxerxes, an opera performed and admired all over Europe.—*

*But as the narrative part of this drama may seem too barren of forcible epithets, which, in reading or speaking, dignify the stile, it may be necessary to give Mr. Dryden's and Lord Lansdown's sentiments on the occasion, which exactly correspond with those of our author. Mr. Dryden says, "That no critic can justly determine the merit or difficulty of writing a poem for music, till he has been frequently conversant with some skilful musician, and acquired, by experience, a knowledge of what is most proper for musical expression :"—*

*And Lord Lansdown, in his preface to the British Enchanters, exclaims against that species of dramatic dialogue, which (instead of being free, natural, and easy,*

A

as

## P R E F A C E.

as conversation should be) is precise, or formal, arguing pro and con, like disputants in a school; he further asks the question, "Whether in writing, as in dress, it is not possible to be too exact, too starch'd, and too formal?" and concludes thus — "Pleasing negligence many have seen; who ever saw pleasing formality?"

Metastasio, in his dialect, seems to affect simplicity; and from his great experience in writing for music, has given the following plan for the poetry of an opera, viz.

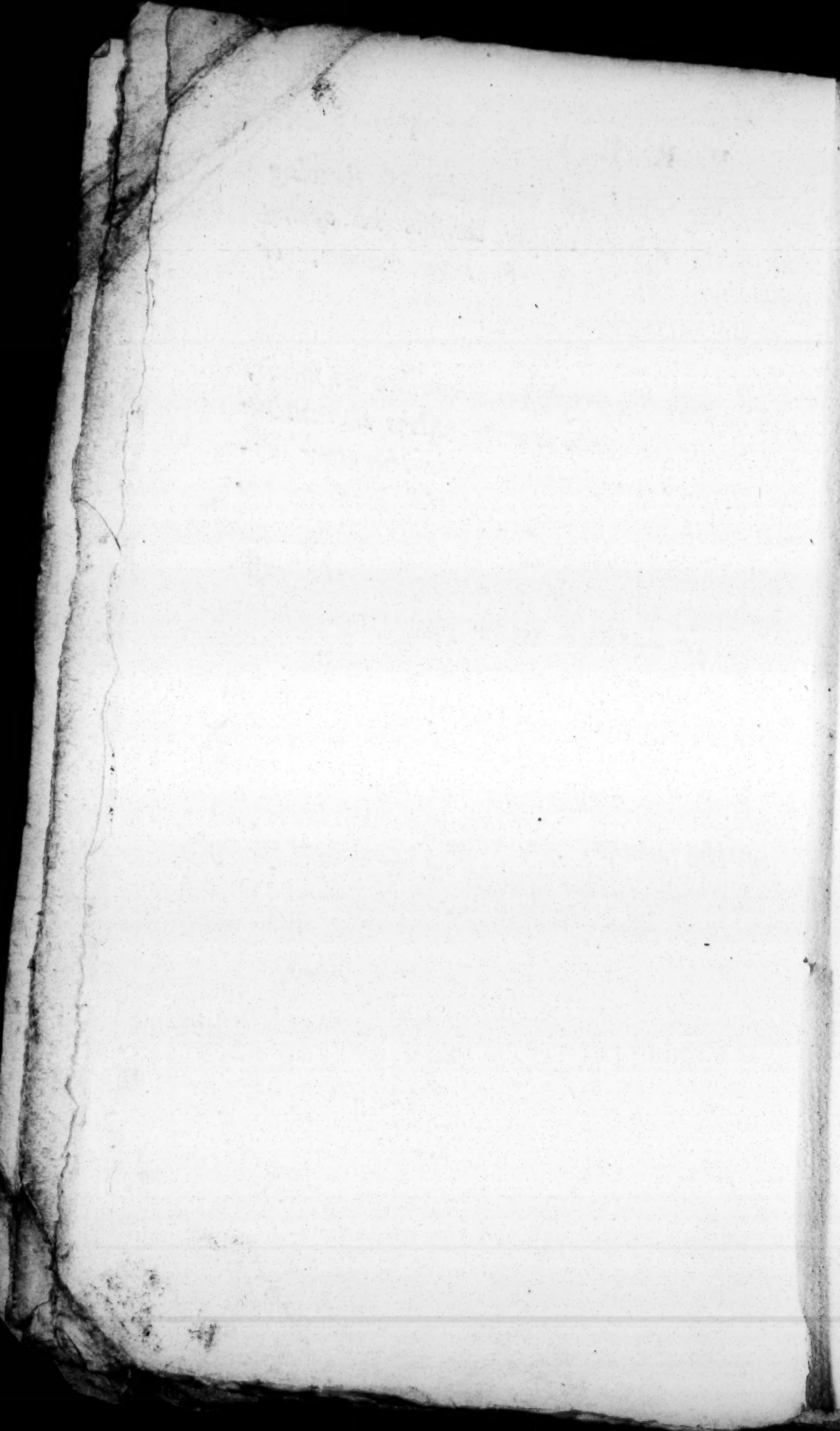
That the fable, or recitative, to which fixed musical sounds are adapted, should be simple dialect; hard and dissonant epithets (though ever so forcible in other respects) being destructive to music, and, when sung, for the chief part, unintelligible. — That the similes be confined to the songs; and that the words, which are to express them, be as smooth and sonorous as possible, lest the composer be cramped in his fancy, and  
the

## P R E F A C E.

*the singers rendered incapable of shewing their skill, which chiefly consists in openly displaying the tones of their voices, or running executive passages.*

*The translator of this opera has no merit, but from his endeavour to follow the author in all these particulars. He therefore submits this first attempt of the kind to the favour and indulgence of the public, not doubting that (if they consider the difficulty of writing under such restrictions, the necessity of sometimes departing from the author, on account of the different idioms of our language; and of leaving out many beauties in the narrative part of the drama, for the sake of brevity;) they will rather peruse it with an eye of favour than severity.*





## THE ARGUMENT.

*Xerxes*, king of *Persia*, having been often discomfited by the *Greeks*, his power began greatly to decline ; which *Artabanes*, commander of the royal guards, perceiving, he entertained the hopes of sacrificing to his ambition, not only *Xerxes*, but all the royal family, and by that method to ascend the throne of *Persia* ; for which purpose, availing himself of the advantage which his familiarity and friendship with the king gave him, he entered, at dead of night, the apartment of *Xerxes*, and slew him.

He afterwards so irritated the young princes against one another, that *Artaxerxes*, one of the said princes, caused his brother *Darius* to be slain, believing him the parricide, by the artful insinuations of *Artabanes*.

Now nothing was wanting to complete his treasonous designs but the death of *Artaxerxes* ; which *Artabanes* having prepared, though by various accidents delayed (which furnish the episodical ornaments of this drama) he could not accomplish it, the treason being discovered, and *Artaxerxes* preserved : Which discovery and preservation form the principal action of the ensuing drama.

JUSTIN, *lib. 3. cap. 1.*

The action is represented in and near the palace of the kings of *Persia*, in the city of *Susa*.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ARTAXERXES, prince and afterwards  
king of *Persia*; friend to ARBACES,  
and in love with SEMIRA. } Mr. Peretti.

ARTABANES, generalissimo, and fa-  
vourite of the royal family; father  
to ARBACES and SEMIRA. } Mr. Beard.

ARBACES, friend of ARTAXERXES,  
in love with MANDANE. } Mr. Tenducci.

RIMENES, a general of the army, and  
confidant of ARTABANES. } Mr. Mattocks.

MANDANE, sister to ARTAXERXES,  
in love with ARBACES. } Miss Brent.

SEMIRA, sister to ARBACES, in love  
with ARTAXERXES. } Miss Potier.

*Nobles, Guards, and Attendants.*



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# ARTAXERXES.

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## ACT I. SCENE I.

*An inner garden belonging to the palace of  
the king of PERSIA. Moon-light.*

MANDANE and ARBACES.

MANDANE.

**S**TILL silence reigns around, suspicion sleeps.  
And unperceiv'd, you may escape these walls.

*Arb.* Adieu, my love; O think on thy *Arbaces*.

*Man.* Yet stay, sweet youth, a few short minutes  
stay.

*Arb.* Ador'd *Mandane*! see the dawn appears.

### DUETTINO.

*Fair Aurora, pr'ythee stay;  
O retard unwelcome day:  
Think what anguish rends my breast;  
Thus caressing, thus carest;  
From the idol of my heart  
Forc'd at thy approach to part.*

*Arb.* Alas, thou know'st that for my love to thee,  
The king, great *Xerxes*, thy too rigid father,

## A R T A X E R X E S.

Has banish'd me the palace; thou'd he know,  
That in defiance of his stern command,  
I have presum'd to scale this garden wall;  
How little would a lover's plea avail,  
When thou, his daughter, cou'dst not move his pity.

*Man.* Thy noble father, mighty *Artabanes*,  
Disposes at his will the heart of *Xerxes*,  
And the young prince my brother *Artaxerxes*,  
Brought up with thee in virtuous emulation,  
Honours thy worth, and boasts thy valu'd friendship;  
Their in'trest may soften his resentment.

*Arb.* Weak are their efforts, while his kingly pride  
Disdains to rank a princess with a subject.

*Man.* My spirits sink, my heart forgets to beat,  
I have not fortitude to bear thy loss—  
And must we part?—then all good angels guard thee.

## A I R.

*Adieu, thou lovely youth,  
Let hope thy fears remove;  
Preserve thy faith and truth,  
But never doubt my love.*

[Exit.

## S C E N E II.

*Arb.* O cruel parting! how can I survive?  
Divided thus from all that's sweet and fair,  
From her, for whom alone I live.—

Enter ARTABANES.

*Art.* Son, *Arbaces*.

*Arb.* My father!

*Art.* Give me thy sword.

*Arb.* Sir, I obey.

*Art.* Here, take thou mine.

*Arb.* 'Tis drench'd in blood!

*Art.*

# ARTAXERXES.

11

*Art.* Fly, hide it from all eyes;  
*Xerxes* the king this daring arm hath slain.

*Arb.* Forbid it, heav'n!

*Art.* O much lov'd son!  
Thy treatment was the spur to my revenge—  
For thee I'm guilty.

*Arb.* Wou'd I had ne'er been born.

*Art.* Let not weak scruples thwart my great design;

Perhaps *Arbaces* shall be king of *Persia*.

*Arb.* I'm all confusion—

*Art.* No more—begone.

*Arb.* O fatal day—unhappy lost *Arbaces*.

## A I R.

*Amid a thousand cracking woes,  
I pant, I tremble, and I feel,  
Cold blood from ev'ry vein distill,  
And clog my lab'ring heart.* [Exit.

Omitted  
in the re-  
presenta-  
tion.

*I see my fair one's lost repose,  
And O! lament the fatal curse;  
That he who gave me life cou'd thus  
From virtue's laws depart.*

## S C E N E III.

*ARTABANES solus.*

Be firm, my heart.—In the pursuit of guilt,  
The first advance admits not a retreat:  
The royal blood, to the last hateful drop,  
Must then be shed. Conscience, thy checks are  
vain—

The prince appears—now art's my only refuge.

A 5

Enter



## ARTAXERXES.

*Enter ARTAXERXES, RIMENES, and Guards.*

*Artax.* Dear *Artabanes*, glad I meet thee here ;  
Thy prince demands thy counsel,  
Thy royalty—revenge—

*Art.* I tremble, fir—  
This dire injunction wants an explanation.

*Artax.* Disastrous fate—yonder my father lies  
Savagely murder'd !

*Art.* Ah ! my ill-boding fears !  
Unfated thirst of empire !  
Alas ! — will nothing but a father's blood,  
Allay thy heat, and quench thy raging fever !

*Artax.* Well I conceive—my faithless cruel brother—*Darius*—

*Art.* Who but he at dead of night could penetrate

The palace ! Who approach the royal bed ;  
Nay more, his known ambition—

*Artax.* O, if here lives a heart that calls me friend,  
Or feels compassion for his slaughter'd king,  
Quick let him bring the traitor to our presence.

*Art.* That welcome task be mine—

*Guards*, follow me.

*Artax.* Yet stay—

*Darius* is the son of *Xerxes*.

*Art.* Who kills the father, is no more a son.

## A I R.

Behold ! on *Lethe's* dismal strand  
Thy father's troubled spirit stand !  
In his face what grief profound !  
See he rolls his haggard eyes ;  
Hark ! revenge ! revenge he cries ;  
And points to his still bleeding wound :  
Obey the call, revenge his death ;  
And calm his soul that gave thee breath. [Exit.

## SCENE

## S C E N E IV.

ARTAXERXES going. Enter SEMIRA.

*Sem.* Stay, *Artaxerxes*, stay.

*Artax.* Adieu, *Semira*.

*Sem.* And dost thou fly me? go then, cruel prince,  
No more shall ill-tim'd fondness importune thee.

*Artax.* Beauteous *Semira*, should I longer stay,  
There's such a syren sweetness in thy voice,  
'Twould lull me to forget my filial duty.

*Sem.* Away, ungrateful.

## A I R.

*Artax.* Fair *Semira*, lovely maid,  
Cease in pity to upbraid  
My oppress'd but constant heart :  
Full sufficient are the woes  
Which my cruel stars impose ;  
Heav'n, alas ! has done its part. [Exit.

## S C E N E V.

*Sem.* I fear some dread disaster——say, *Rimenes*,  
What means this strange confusion in the prince?

*Rim.* *Xrxes* is slain——

Suspicion points the finger at *Darius* ;  
And *Artaxerxes* bears a dreadful conflict,  
'Twixt filial duty to revenge his father,  
And brotherly compassion for *Darius*.

*Sem.* O fatal deed ! th' effect of wild ambition ;  
Heav'n knows if *Artaxerxes*' life be safe.

*Rim.* Let fate be busy in destructive slaughter,  
We blest with love, and seated on the shore,  
Will view the destin'd shipwreck.

*Sem.*

## ARTAXERXES.

*Sem.* Think not that love can find a place to enter,

When the sad heart's furrounded with misfortunes ;  
 Leave me, *Rimenes*, to my troubled thoughts.

*Rim.* Your web of scorn is not so closely woven,  
 But I can see between each subtle thread,  
 Yet, born to love, undaunted, I'll pursue thee :  
 Since hope inspires my breast, what you deny,  
 Ungrateful maid ! kind fancy shall supply.

## A I R.

*When real joy we miss,  
 'Tis some degree of bliss,  
 I' enjoy ideal pleasure,  
 And dream of hidden treasure.*

*The soldier dreams of wars,  
 And conquers without scars ;  
 The sailor in his sleep,  
 With safety ploughs the deep :*

*So I, thro' fancy's aid,  
 Enjoy my heav'nly maid,  
 And blest with thee and love,  
 Am greater far than Jove.*

[Exit.

## SCENE VI.

SEMIRA *sola.*

Ye gods, protectors of the Persian empire,  
 Preserve my *Artaxerxes* — Yet he blest —  
*Semira's* state is wretched : *Xerxes* dead,  
 This prince will mount the throne :  
 Belov'd by me, and rais'd above my hopes,  
 The hand which he intreated, when a subject,  
 When sov'reign of *Persia*, he'll disdain.

## A I R.



## A I R.

*How hard is my fate,  
How desp'rate my state,  
When virtue and honour excite,  
To suffer distress,  
Contented to bless,  
The object in whom I delight.*

*Yet 'midst all the woes,  
My soul undergoes,  
Thro' virtue's too rigid decree;  
I'll scorn to complain,  
If the force of my pain  
Awaken his pity for me.*

[Exit.]

SCENE VII *The palace.**Enter MANDANE.*

Where do I fly?—Ah, hapless maid!——  
Thus, in one fatal instant,  
To lose a brother, father, and a lover!

*Enter ARTAXERXES.**Artax. Alas, Mandane!**Man. Does Darius live?*

Or are thy guilty hands  
Imbru'd in brother's blood?

*Artax. Fain wou'd I shun that deed,  
Which to prevent, I've search'd throughout the  
palace,*

*For Artabanes and Darius——**But all in vain.——**Man. See, Artabanes comes.*

SCENE

## SCENE VIII.

*Enter ARTABANES.**Artax.* My friend ! —*Art.* I fought you, fir——All is accomplish'd.*Artax.* Ha ! speak, explain.*Art.* Your father's death's reveng'd,  
*Darius* slain, and *Artaxerxes* now  
Is *Persia's* king.*Artax.* O gods !*Man.* O dire misfortune ?*Art.* Why that deep sigh, my liege ? 'twas your  
command.*Artax.* Alas ! 'tis true, the guilt is only mine.*Art.* What guilt, my sovereign ?'Twas merely justice to your murder'd father.  
Take comfort, fir ;  
And think, that in *Darius'* death.  
A wicked bloody parricide is punish'd.

## SCENE IX.

*Enter SEMIRA.**Sem.* O *Artaxerxes* !*Artax.* Say, fair *Semira*, why this seeming joy ?*Sem.* *Darius* is not guilty of the murder.*Man.* What do I hear ?*Artax.* I'm struck with double horror.*Sem.* Th' assassin is secur'd.*Artax.* O quick, proceed.*Sem.* Your watchful centinels, when he had leap'd  
The garden wall, o'ertook him as he fled.  
His deep confusion, palid countenance,  
And sword yet reeking with the crimson blood,  
Strongly proclaim him guilty.*Artax.*

*Artax.* But the name?

*Sem.* At my request to know it,  
All hung their heads in silence.

*Art.* Alas, it is my son. [*Aside.*

*Artax.* Must *Artaxerxes* then ascend the throne,  
Dissain'd with brother's blood?—

O, I shall never taste of peace again.—  
Quick, bring this traitor; that unbounded rage  
May execute the vengeance he deserves.—

Hold, *Artabanes*—dear *Mandane*, stay—

*Semira*, leave me not in this distress.—

Where is my friend *Arbaces*?

*Artab.* He was forbid the court by royal *Xerxes*,  
For his presumptuous love of fair *Mandane*.

*Artax.* Fly, bring him to my arms — I here  
absolve him.

## SCENE X.

*Enter RIMENES with ARBACES prisoner.*

*Rim.* Who in this royal presence would believe  
*Arbaces* to be guilty?

*Artab.* How!

*Artax.* My friend!

*Artab.* My son!

*Sem.* My brother!

*Man.* Oh, ye gods! my lover!

*Artax.* Wou'd in the pangs of death I'd met my  
friend,

Rather than thus in fetters like a traitor.

*Arb.* I'm innocent.

*Artax.* O, make but that appear,  
And doubly 'twill endear thee to my love.

*Arb.* I am not guilty, that's my only plea.

*Artab.* This prudent caution answers to my wish.

[*Aside.*

*Man.*



*Man.* But your resentment 'gainst the king—

*Arb.* Was just.

*Artax.* Didst thou not fly?

*Arb.* I did.

*Man.* This thy reserve——

*Arb.* Is requisite.

*Artax.* And thy down-cast confusion——

*Arb.* Is suited to th' occasion.

*Rim.* This bloody sword—— [Shewing it.

*Arb.* Was in the scabbard, when you took me prisoner.

*Artab.* And can'st thou yet deny the cruel deed?

*Arb.* Great sir, I still assert my innocence.

*Artab.* Audacious boy! thus obstinate in ill,  
Thy fight's my torment, and this deed my shame.

*Arb.* And does my father join in my destruction?

## A I R.

*Artab.* Thy father! away, I renounce the soft claim;  
Thou spot on my honour, thou blast to my fame,  
Let justice the traitor to punishment bring;  
His father he lost, when he murder'd his king.  
[Exit.

## SCENE XI.

*Arb.* Ye cruel gods, what crime have I committed,  
To draw relentless vengeance on my head? —  
*Semira!* sister! hear me with compassion.

## A I R.

*Sem.* Acquit thee of this foul offence,  
Return with spotless innocence;  
Then shall my hapless brother see,  
That never sister lov'd like me. [Exit.

## SCENE.

## SCENE XII.

*Arb.* Appearance, I must own, is strong against me,

But truth is on my side—I'm innocent.

*Artax.* Pray heav'n thou may'st ; but till the law decide,

You must remain a prisoner. [Exit.

*Arb.* Ah, dear *Rimenes*, pity my hard fate,—  
My friend !

*Rim.* I am no traitor's friend — Adieu. [Exit.

## SCENE XIII.

*Arb.* Beauteous *Mandane*, turn at least and hear me.

*Man.* Away ! you sue in vain. [Going.

*Arb.* O stay, I charge thee——  
Think on thy former love.

*Man.* 'Tis turn'd to hate.

*Arb.* And you believe me guilty ?

*Man.* I am convinc'd.

## A I R.

*Arb.* O too lovely, too unkind,  
If my lips no credit find ;  
Pierce my breast, my heart shall prove  
Strong in virtue, firm in love ;  
Guiltless, wretched, left forlorn,  
And worse than murder'd by thy scorn.  
[Exit guarded.

## SCENE

## SCENE XIV.

MANDANE *sola.**Recitative accompanied.*

Dear and beloved shade of my dead father,  
Thee I invoke to spirit up my rage,  
Lest fond credulity too strongly plead,  
And turn my purpose from a just revenge;  
For, oh, I feel the tyrant love within,  
He rends my breast, he struggles for *Arbaces*;  
Help me, kind gods, to tear away his image.

A I R.

*Fly, soft ideas, fly;  
That neither tear nor sigh,  
My virtue may betray:  
Nature's great call,  
That governs all,  
A daughter must obey.  
Alas! my soul denies,  
To hear revenge's cries;  
Dare not, fond heart,  
To take his part,  
But drive his form away.*

[Exit.]

END OF THE FIRST ACT.



## ACT II. SCENE I.

*The Royal Apartments.**Enter ARTAXERXES and ARTABANES.*

ARTAXERXES.

GUARDS, speed ye to the tower,  
 And instantly conduct *Arbaces* to me,  
*Artab.* Good my Lord,  
 Think not the partial fondness of a father  
 Has urg'd this council.

*Artax.* No; 'tis justice dictates;  
 He still persists that he is innocent,  
 And his fair truth was ne'er till now suspected:  
 I will withdraw.—  
 O, reconcile the safety of your son,  
 With your king's peace, and th' honour of his  
 throne.

A I R.

*In infancy our hopes and fears,  
 Were to each other known;  
 And friendship in our riper years,  
 Has twin'd our hearts in one.  
 O clear him then from this offence,  
 Thy love, thy duty prove;  
 Restore him with that innocence,  
 Which first inspir'd my love.* [Exit.

SCENE II.

*Artab.* So far my great resolve succeeds.  
 Approach, *Arbaces*.

*Enter ARBACES and Guards.*  
 And you, his guards, in the next chamber wait.  
 [Exeunt guards.

*Arb.* My father!*Artab.*

*Artab.* Ever watchful to preserve thee,  
I artfully have gain'd from *Artaxerxes*,  
The liberty to question thee :  
Take then this fortunate occasion,  
And by a secret way, which I will shew thee,  
Delude the guards, and fly.

*Arb.* Sir, my escape  
Wou'd rise in evidence to prove me guilty.

*Artab.* 'Tis folly all ! I give thee liberty ;  
From the king's wrath I snatch thee ; and, perhaps,  
The public voice shall call thee to the throne.

*Arb.* What said you, Sir ?

*Artab.* Long have you known  
The people's hatred to the royal blood :  
Away.

The sight of you will fire the mut'nous troops ;  
Whose leaders to your interest are sworn.

*Arb.* I turn a rebel !—Horror's in the thought.  
Your pardon, Sir.—Is this a father's counsel !  
Guards, enter quick, bring me again my chains—  
Conduct me to my prison.

*Artab.* I burn with rage.

*Arb.* Yet calm this transport——think on my  
affliction——

Sir — father — turn — O grant one kind adieu.

*Artab.* Unworthy boy ! I'm deaf to thy request.

## A I R.

*Arb.* *Disdainful you fly me,  
In anger exclaim ;  
All comfort deny me,  
And murder my fame.*

*No grief can the heart  
To pity incline,  
That bears not a part  
In sorrow like mine.*

*Nature's.*

*Nature's tender plea is vain ;  
Welcome then my chains again.*

*O rigour unjust !  
O counsel accurst !  
Ambition ill-plac'd ;  
My virtue disgrac'd ;  
The pains I endure,  
Death only can cure.*

*Disdainful you fly me,  
In anger exclaim ;  
All comfort deny me,  
And murder my fame.*

*No grief can the heart,  
To pity incline,  
That bears not a part  
In sorrow like mine.*

*Nature's tender plea is vain ;  
Welcome then my chains again.*

[Exit with the guards.]

### SCENE III.

*Enter RIMENES.*

*Rim.* Why, my dear friend, so pensive, so inactive ?

*Artab.* My wayward son, that bar to my ambition,  
At once rejects both liberty and crown.

*Rim.* Let us away, and force him from the tower.

*Artab.* The present time may better be employ'd,  
If *Artaxerxes* perish by our hands——  
Let not my friend betray me.

*Rim.* I, my lord !

Forbid it, gratitude ! my abject state,  
Cast me below the notice of mankind,  
'Till your great pow'r exalted me to honour.

*Artab.*



*Artab.* Small recompence for thy good services.  
But should kind fortune smile on this attempt,  
Then judge if *Artabanes* loves his friend.

*Rim.* My hand, my heart, are guided by your will.

*Artab.* I have observ'd thy passion for *Semira*—  
Spare thy confusion ; and let this great instance  
Prove my esteem——*Semira* shall be thine.

*Rim.* Thanks, gracious sir——my joy is past expression.

*Artab.* Come hither, daughter. [*Seeing Semira.*]

## SCENE IV.

*Enter SEMIRA.*

In this valiant chief,  
Behold thy lord and husband.

*Sem.* Cruel sound !

O, sir, reflect——Is this a time for nuptials,  
When my unhappy brother——

*Artab.* Peace, no more.——

'Tis my command——reply not, but obey. [*Exit.*]

## SCENE V.

*Sem.* I tremble —— hear me, sir —— O, if you  
love me,  
Prevent this marriage.

*Rim.* Sure *Semira* mocks me ?

*Sem.* Tho', by constraint, you seize my helpless  
hand,

My heart disdains the brutal violence.

*Rim.* Give me thy beauty, and reserve thy heart ;  
Thou keep'st the worst, I gain the better part.

A I R.

## A I R.

*To sigh and complain,  
Alike I disdain ;  
Contented my wish to enjoy ;  
I scorn to reflect,  
On a lady's neglect,  
Or barter my peace for a toy.*

*In love as in war,  
I laugh at a scar,  
And if my proud enemy yield ;  
The joy that remains,  
Is to lead her in chains,  
And glean the rich spoils of the field.* (Exit.

## S C E N E VI.

*Sem.* How many links to dire misfortune's chain,  
Are woven in one day !

*Enter MANDANE.*

Stay, dear *Mandane*——

Why this haste ?

*Man.* I attend the council.

*Sem.* I'll too attend if ought within my pow'r,  
May help my brother.

*Man.* Our views are diff'rent ; thou desirest to  
save him ;

I seek his death.

*Sem.* Is this a language for *Arbaces'* lover ?

*Man.* It well becomes the daughter of dead *Xerxes*.

*Sem.* Away, thou cruel maid !

Enforce his crime, and urge his speedy death.  
But first prepare your heart, and quite erase  
The soft remembrance of your former passion,  
The tender hopes and fears, warm vows of truth,  
Fond

Fond sighs exchang'd, and last the sweet idea  
Of that dear form, which first inspir'd your love.

*Man.* Ah barbarous *Semira*! thus to wake  
My guilty pity! rebel to my duty.

## A I R.

*If oe'r the cruel tyrant love,  
A conquest I believ'd;  
The flat'ring error cease to prove,  
O let me be deceiv'd.  
Forbear to fan the gentle flame,  
Which love did first create,  
What was my pride is now my shame;  
And must be turn'd to hate.*

*Then call not to my wav'ring mind,  
The weakness of my heart;  
Which, ah! I feel too much inclin'd,  
To take the traitor's part.*

[Exit.]

## SCENE VII.

SEMIRA *Sola.*

Which fatal evil shall I first oppose?  
My princess, brother, this detested lover,  
The king, my father, all are enemies;  
And each attacks me in some tender part:  
While I exert my pow'r against the one,  
The others rush on my defenceless breast.

## A I R.

*If the river's swelling waves,  
Overflow their usual bed;  
Scarce the affrighted peasant saves,  
From the flood his homely shed.*

Tho'



*Tho' he stop one open shore,  
Where the waters swiftly glide,  
In an hundred places more,  
Rushes in th' impetuous tide.*

[Exit.

## SCENE VIII.

*A hall of Royal council with a throne, seats on the sides  
for the grandees of the kingdom, a small table and chair  
on the right hand of the throne, Artaxerxes, preceded  
by guards, afterwards by the nobles, follow'd by Man-  
dane, Semira, Artabanes and Rimenes.*

*Artax.* Ye solid polite of the *Persian* empire,  
Behold me fated to sustain the cares  
Of my paternal throne, and much I'm griev'd  
That my lov'd father's death, so heavy lies  
Upon my absent friend; but since *Arbaces*  
Denies this accusation; let the father,  
Whose virtues have endear'd him to our favour,  
Be the son's judge to cast him or acquit him;  
In him is invested all our regal pow'r.

*Man.* In him? does friendship so prevail o'er duty?

*Artax.* Not so, *Mandane*, for his loyal father  
Has double reason for severity:  
I ought to vindicate the death of *Xerxes*;  
But if *Arbaces* be the criminal,  
His father, with more rigour, will revenge  
His monarch's death, and his own public shame.

*Artab.* Ah, Sir, what trial!—

*Artax.* Worthy of thy virtue—

If any think me partial, let him speak.

*Rim.* This silence is a gen'ral approbation.

*Sem.* My brother comes.

*Man.* Ah me!

*Artax.* Give your attention.

[*Ascends the throne, the grandees sit.*

*Man.* (*aside.*) Now prudence guide the reins of  
my affection.

Cease, busy heart, to flutter in my breast.

B

SCENE

## SCENE IX.

— Enter ARBACES in chains guarded.

*Arb.* Am I so much the hatred of all *Persia*,  
That it unites to witness my misfortune?  
My sovereign!

*Artax.* O *Arbaces*, call me friend;  
For till thy crime is prov'd, that title's mine,  
But, as a name so tender ill becomes  
Th' impartial judge, thy most unhappy cause  
I have assign'd to worthy *Artabanes*.

*Arb.* My father judge?

*Artax.* Yes, he.

*Arb.* I'm chill'd with horror.

*Artab.* *Arbaces*, in this presence thou appear'st  
To be the murderer of royal *Xerxes*:  
The circumstances urg'd are these—  
That thou hast entertain'd presumptuous love  
Of this most honour'd princess;  
For which, by *Xerxes* banish'd from the court,  
You sought revenge, and found it in his death.

*Arb.* Nay more, the bloody sword, the time, the place,  
And flight, conspire to fix the guilt on me,  
And yet my heart is free;—I'm innocent.

*Artab.* Demonstrate that, and so appease the wrath  
Of this offended princess.

Omitted in the representation.

*Arb.* Ah! forbear;—

If you would have me with a steady mind,  
Support my sufferings; make not th' assault  
In such a tender part.—Barbarous father!

*Artab.* Rash young man be silent—

Consider where thou art, and who attends thee.

*Man.* Be still, my beating heart. [Aside.]

*Artax.* But this thy crime,  
Requires defence, or a sincere repentance.

*Arb.* My king, I find no crime to be defended,  
Nor motive for repentance; that's my answer.

*Artab.* O, filial love! [Aside.]  
*Man.*

*Man.* Whether he plead or not,  
He equally is guilty.—Where is justice?  
Is this the father that should vindicate,  
His murder'd king, and his own public shame?

*Arb.* Cruel *Mandane*! does thy voice condemn me?

*Man.* Bear up, my heart. [Aside.

*Artab.* Your just resentment, princess!  
Spurs on my lazy virtue.—  
Let *Persia* then, in *Artabanes* rigour,  
Record his justice and his loyalty.— [Takes the pen.  
My son I here condemn— [Signs.] *Arbaces* dies.

*Man.* Oh gods!

*Artax.* Suspend a while, the rash decree.

[*Artabanes* rises, and gives the paper  
to *Artaxerxes*.]

*Artab.* 'Tis sign'd, my liege—I have fulfilled my  
duty.

*Artax.* Unnatural sentence!

*Sem.* O inhuman father!

*Man.* Alas, my tears betray me.

*Arb.* Weeps *Mandane*,  
In pity of my cruel destiny?

*Man.* Pleasure may start a tear, as well as grief.

*Artab.* Now I have finish'd the stern judge's part,  
Permit, O king, the feelings of a father.  
Pardon, my son, th' effect of tyrant duty;  
Suffer with patience, and remember this,  
The worst of every evil is the fear.

*Arb.* My patience, sir, begins at last to leave me:

Omitted. { In view o' th' world, to find myself expos'd  
A seeming guilty object; all my hopes  
Cut off i' th' bloom, the morn of life my end;  
Hated by *Persia*, by my king,  
And her whom I adore: to know that you,  
Barbarous father,—(Ah, I lose myself!)

Adieu.—

*Artab.* I freeze.

*Man.* I die.

[Going.

[Aside.



*Arb.* Stay, rash *Arbaces*! [Returning.  
Where wou'dst thou go? Ah, sir, forgive your son;  
Behold me at your feet.—

Excuse the transports of my frantick grief;  
Shed all my blood, 'tis yours,—I'll not complain;  
But kiss the honour'd hand that sign'd my death.

*Artab.* Enough, O rise——  
Thou hast but too much reason to lament:  
But know—(O gods!—take one embrace, and part.

## A I R.

*Arb.* By that belov'd embraces,  
By this my fond adieu,  
Deplore my hapless case,  
Condemn'd, alas! by you.  
Appease my love, my truth commend,  
Yourself preserve, my king defend.  
My sentence I obey,  
To filial duty true;  
And scarce have power to say  
A long and last adieu! [Exit, guarded.

## S C E N E X.

*Man.* Ah me! at poor *Arbaces* parting,  
I feel the stroke of death.

*Artab.* I hope, *Mandane's* wrath will now subside;  
For I have sacrific'd my only son,  
To satisfy her vengeance.

*Man.* Savage, no more——  
Avoid my presence; dare not to view the light  
Of sun or stars; but hide thy cruel head  
Within the deepest bowels of the earth.

*Artab.* Is then my virtue——

*Man.* Silence, inhuman!

*Artab.* Did not *Mandane's* rage, excite my justice?

*Man.* The daughter ought to vindicate the father;  
But thou, a father, shou'dst have sav'd thy son.

A I R.

## A I R.

*Monster away !  
 From chearful Day ;  
 To the gloomy defart fly :  
 Paths explore,  
 Where lions roar,  
 And devouring tygers lie :  
 Tho' for food,  
 They wade in blood,  
 All to save their young agree :  
 Ev'ry creature,  
 Fierce by nature,  
 Harmless is compar'd to thee.*

[Exit.

## S C E N E XI.

*Artax.* See, lov'd *Semira* !  
 How heav'n conspires the ruin of *Arbaces*.

*Sem.* Inhuman tyrant !  
 You first destroy your friend,  
 And then bewail him.

*Artax.* to thy father's will, his life committed ;  
 How was I then a tyrant ?——  
 All *Persia* knows my friendship for *Arbaces*,  
 And faithful love to thee.

*Sem.* I thought you once  
 A tender lover and a gen'rous friend ;  
 But in one instant you have prov'd yourself  
 In friendship false, and treacherours in love.

## A I R

*This bosom, a stranger to rest,  
 Resentment and pity assail,  
 As both for dominion contest,  
 So both to my sorrow, prevail.*

## ARTAXERXES.

*My heart, in this desperate state,  
To give each assailant its due,  
Now bleeds for my brother's hard fate,  
And burns with resentment to you.* [Exit.

## SCENE XII.

*Artax.* O Artabanes?

*Artab.* Lament not, sir, but leave complaints to me;

I am the most unhappy of mankind.

*Artax.* Thy woe must needs be great,  
When mine is insupportable. [Exit.

## SCENE XIII.

ARTABANES *Solus.*

*Recitative accompanied.*

At length my soul has room t'indulge its grief—  
What racking thoughts surround the guilty breast—  
O my dear son, forgive the piercing woes,  
Which my foul deeds inflict upon thy youth:  
I come to save thee from the jaws of death,  
And pay thy virtues with a kingly throne.

A I R.

*Thou, like the glorious sun,  
Thy splended course shall run:  
What tho' the night  
Obscure his light,  
When prison'd in the west;  
The day returns,  
Again he burns,  
The god of day confest.*

[Exit.

ACT



## ACT III. SCENE I.

*A Prison.**ARBACES in a melancholy Posture.*

A R I E T T A.

**W**HY is death for ever late,  
 To conclude a wretch's woe;  
 Those who live in happy State,  
 Feel too soon th' untimely blow.

*Enter ARTAXERXES.**Artax. Arbaces!*

*Arb.* Gracious heav'n, what's this I see!  
 Does royal *Artaxerxes* deign to visit  
 The wretch *Arbaces*, in this horrid gloom!

*Artax.* Pity and friendship brought me here to  
 save thee.

*Arb.* To save me?

*Artax.* Yes. That secret passage leads  
 To life and liberty; then quickly fly—  
 Remember *Artaxerxes*, and be happy.

*Arb.* Your pardon, sir, the world esteems me  
 guilty——

Then let me die; your honour, sir, requires it.  
 Happy my exit, having once preserv'd  
 My sov'reign's life, and now his spotless honour.

*Artax.* Such noble sentiments can ne'er proceed  
 From guilty minds——belov'd *Arbaces* fly——  
 As friend I beg thee to preserve thyself;  
 But if that fails —— as sovereign I command thee.

B 4

*Arb.*

*Arb.* In gratitude to thy exalted friendship,  
 I'll quit this scene of horror and despair,  
 But Oh! thus exil'd, I shall only fly,  
 Restless to tread the paths of misery.

## A I R.

*Water parted from the sea,  
 May increase the river's tide;  
 To the bubbling fountain may flee,  
 Or thro' fertile valleys glide:  
 Yet in search of lost repose,  
 Doom'd, like me, forlorn to roam,  
 Still it murmurs as it flows,  
 Till it reach its native home.*

[Exit.

## S C E N E II.

ARTAXERXES Solus.

That front, secure in conscious innocence,  
 Defies the charge of guilt: affliction's veil  
 Can never quite eclipse the inward light,  
 That from a noble soul darts forth its rays,  
 When in the countenance the heart is seen.

## A I R.

*Tho' oft a cloud, with envious shade,  
 Conceals the face of day;  
 The sun is still in flames array'd,  
 His beams immortal not decay'd:  
 Soon the gloomy veil retires;  
 He darts each pow'rful ray,  
 And light and heat expires.*

[Exit.

S C E N E

## SCENE III.

*Enter ARTABANES with a Train of Conspirators.*

My son, *Arbaces*—where art thou retir'd?—  
 Sure he shoul'd hear my voice!--wha tho--*Arbaces*!--  
 O heaven!--Guards watch the entrance of the prison,  
 Till I can find my son. [Exit.

*Enter RIMENES.*

*Rim.* Not yet arriv'd!—  
 Sir, *Artabanes*!— [Exit.

*Re-enter ARTABANES.*

*Artab.* O unhappy father!  
 My son I seek in vain—my blood grows chill;  
 I fear—I doubt—perhaps in—

*Re-enter RIMENES.*

*Rim.* *Artabanes*!  
*Artab.* Where is *Arbaces*?  
*Rim.* Is he not with you?  
*Artab.* O cruel gods! th' unfortunate has perish'd.  
*Rim.* Suspicion always borders on extremes?  
 And might not *Artaxerxes* or *Mandane*,  
 The friend or lover, have procur'd his flight?  
 What strange delay is this!—let's to our task;  
 Behold the way that leads us to the palace.  
*Artab.* And what great enterprise shall I accomplish,  
 My son being lost?



*Rim.* What have you then, for nought,  
 Secur'd the royal guards, and I, the troops?  
 Determine, sir: this instant, *Artaxerxes*  
 Prepares to take the coronation oath;  
 The sacred cup is by your order poison'd:  
 And shall we then so basely——

*Artab.* O my friend!

*Arbaces* lost, for whom shou'd I engage?

*Rim.* Thy son *Arbaces*, from thy hand expects  
 The throne, if living; and if dead, revenge.

*Artab.* That, that alone recalls my fleeting spirit:  
 Lead on, kind friend; my fate depends on thee.

*Rim.* I'll lead thee on to joyful Victory.

## A I R.

*O let the danger of a sun,  
 Excite vindictive ire;  
 The prospect of a kingdom won,  
 Shou'd light ambition's fire.*

*To wounded minds, revenge is balm,  
 With vigour they engage;  
 And sacrifice a pleasing calm  
 To a more pleasing rage.*

[Exit.]

## S C E N E IV.

ARTABANES Solus.

*Recitative accompanied.*

Ye adverse gods! y've found the only way  
 To quell my vast ambition; perplexing doubt,  
 Whether my son yet lives, awakens fear;

And

And the dire image of despair starts up,  
Unnerves my arm, and checks my daring soul.

## A I R.

*O, much lov'd son, if death  
Has stol'n thy vital breath,  
I'll share thy hapless fate;  
But ere the dagger drinks my blood,  
A murder'd king at Lethe's flood,  
The tidings shall relate.*

*Bid Charon cease from toil,  
And rest upon his oar,  
'Till I attain the happy Soil,  
Where we shall part no more.*

[Exit.

## SCENE V.

*MANDANE's Apartment.*

*Enter MANDANE and SEMIRA.*

*Man.* Perhaps the king releas'd *Arbaces*.

*Sem.* No——rather destroy'd him.

*Man.* How!

*Sem.* 'Tis known to all;

In secret he resign'd his wretched life.

*Man.* O hapless youth! O tidings worse than death.

*Sem.* I hope your vengeance now is satisfy'd——  
Or wou'd you other victims?—speak.

*Man.*

*Man.* I cannot ;  
 Light cares are ever soften'd by complaint :  
 But such as mine, arrest the pow'r of speech.

*Sem.* Ne'er liv'd a heart more lost to sense of pity.  
 All eyes in *Persia* wail his hapless fate ;  
 But yours are dry.

*Man.* The deeper my afflictions :  
 Small is the grief that vents itself in tears.

*Sem.* Go, if not satisfy'd, and feast your eyes  
 Upon the slaughter'd spoils of my dear brother :  
 With secret joy, number his bloody wounds.

*Man.* Be silent—leave me.

*Sem.* Never ; while thou liv'st,  
 I'll haunt thee like a spirit, and my wrongs  
 Shall dash thy hopes, with bitterness and woe.

*Man.* You think me cruel, and denounce re-  
 venge——

Ah ! how have I deserv'd thy enmity ?

## A I R.

*Let not rage thy bosom firing,  
 Pity's softer claim remove ;  
 Spare a heart that's just expiring,  
 Forc'd by duty, rack'd by love.*

*Each ungentle thought suspending,  
 Judge of mine, by thy soft breast ;  
 Nor with rancour never ending,  
 Heap fresh sorrows on th' oppress'd.*

*Let not rage thy bosom firing,  
 Pity's softer claim remove ;  
 Spare a heart that's now expiring,*

*Hear'n,*



*Heav'n, that ev'ry joy has crost,  
Ne'er my wretched state can mend;  
I, alas! at once have lost,  
Father, brother, lover, friend.  
Let not rage, &c.*

[Exit.]

## SCENE VI.

SEMIRA alone.

What have I done! alas, I vainly thought,  
Dividing grief, to lessen my affliction;  
These cruel insults, vented on *Mandane*,  
Have pierc'd her breast, and not reliev'd my own.

## A I R.

*'Tis not true that in our grief,  
Others weeping in distress,  
To our troubles bring relief,  
Making each misfortune less.*

*No, when fear oppress'd by fate,  
Better 'tis to sigh alone,  
Than support a double weight,  
Other's sorrows, and our own.*

[Exit]

SCENE

## SCENE VII.

*Enter ARBACES.*

*Arb.* Nor hear my searching eyes can find *Mandane*.  
 Fain wou'd my heart, before eternal exile,  
 Indulge its fondness with a last adieu.  
 Perhaps, this way—but whither do I wander?  
 Rash man——O heav'nly pow'rs behold her there!  
 My spirits fail me—yet I'll speak—*Mandane*!

*Enter MANDANE.*

*Man.* Ye power's! *Arbaces*! and at liberty!

*Arb.* A friendly hand unlock'd my cruel fetters.

*Man.* Ah! fly begone.

*Arb.* How can I part, for ever, from such beauty?

*Man.* Perfidious traitor! what wou'dst thou with me?

*Arb.* Am I no longer dear to my *Mandane*?

*Man.* Thou art become the object of my hate.

*Arb.* Barbarous maid! my death shall end thy scorn.  
 I fly to meet my fate—adieu—fer ever. [going.]

*Man.* Hear me, *Arbaces*.

*Arb.* Ha! what torture more?

*Man.* I cannot speak.

*Arb.* O Heav'n!

*Man.* Fly, save thyself.

*Arb.*

*Arb.* What means my princess? — this returning pity——

*Man.* Does not arise from love — but fly — and live.

## DUETTO.

*Arb.* For thee I live, my dearest;  
But if I meet disdain,  
For thee, my dear, I'll die.

*Man.* How lovely thou appearest,  
My blushes will explain.  
I can no more reply.

*Arb.* Then hear me.

*Man.* No.

*Arb.* Thou art——

*Man.* Divide not thus my heart:  
Leave me——In pity go.

*Both.* Ye gods that torture so,  
Some timely respite send;  
When will your rigour end?

[Exeunt, different ways.]

## SCENE VIII.

*A Temple and Throne, with a Crown and Sceptre;  
the Image of the Sun, with a lighted Altar.*

ARTAXERXES, ARTABANES, Nobles, &c.

*Artax.* To you, my people, much lov'd, I offer  
Myself, not less a father than a king:

Your



Your native rights, your customs, and your laws,  
With jealous care I ever will maintain,  
And raise up treasure in my people's hearts.

*Artab.* Here is the sacred cup——  
Your solemn oath must bind the lasting tie ;  
Fulfil th' accustom'd rites——and drink thy death.  
[*Aside.*

*Recitative accompanied.*

*Artax.* Resplendent god ! by whom sweet *April*  
blossoms,  
Thou genial beam, that warms us and enlightens,  
Look awful down : and if my treach'rous lips  
Have utter'd falshood, may this wholesome draught  
Change, as it passes, into deadly poison.

## SCENE IX.

*Enter SEMIRA, hastily.*

*Sem.* Fly quick, my liege ; thousands of rebel troops  
Surround the palace, by *Rimenes* led ;  
Your death is plotted, and your guards corrupted.

*Artax.* O gods !

*Artab.* What fear you, sir ; my single presence  
Shall quell this tumult, and protect my king.

*Artax.* Away, my friend, to victory or death.

[*Going.*

SCENE

## SCENE X.

*Enter* MANDANE.*Man.* Hold, brother, the rebellious crew are fled.*Artax.* Say how *Mandane*?*Man.* Led by false *Rimenes*,They forc'd the gates, and enter'd, when *Arbaces*  
Departing to eternal banishment,

His single breast oppos'd, and swore to die

In his great master's cause: All drop'd their arms,  
Except that daring rebel at their head,On him *Arbaces* like a lion flew,

Clove thro' his helmet, slew him, and reveng'd thee.

*Artax.* Where's my preserver—bring him to my  
arms? [*Exit officers, with guards.*]He murder'd *Xerxes*! Impious supposition!*Man.* My heart respires!*Sem.* O loyal brother!*Man.* Valour suppress'd, now springs again to  
glory.

## A I R.

*The soldier, tir'd of wars alarms,**Forswears the clang of hostile arms,**And scorns the spear and shield:**But if the brazen trumpet sound,**He burns with conquests to be crown'd,**And dares again the field.*

SCENE.

SCENE, *the Last.**Enter ARTABANES and ARBACES.**Arb.* Behold my king, *Arbaces* at thy feet.*Artax.* O still my friend! come to my grateful breast.*Man.* Yet that my brother may with better grace  
Reward this deed, and satisfy the people,  
Some reason give us for the bloody sword,  
Thy tim'rous flight, and all that wak'd suspicion.*Arb.* If deeds, not words, proclaim a loyal heart,  
Permit me to be silent—I am innocent.*Artax.* Confirm it with a solemn imprecation,  
And of a truth, as *Persia's* law prescribes,  
That Vessel drain'd shall be the sacred pledge.*Arb.* I am prepar'd.*Artab.* O cruel gods! if my son drinks he's  
poison'd.*Recitative accompanied.**Arb.* Resplendent god, by whom sweet *April*  
blooms,

Thou geneal beam that warms us and enlightens!

*Artab. (aside.)* O wretched father!*Arb.* If my treach'rous lips,Have utter'd falshood, may this wholesome draught,  
Change, as it passes, into——*Artab.* Hold, 'tis poison.*Artax.* What fury urg'd thee to so vile a deed?*Artab.* Away disguise; the draught was meant for  
thee;

But

But my paternal fondness has betray'd me.  
murder'd *Xerxes* ; and, to gain the throne,  
Wou'd have destroy'd thee too.

*Artax.* Wretch, thou shalt die.

*Arb.* Then I disdain to live.

*Artax.* *Mandane* shall reward thy spotless virtue :  
And thy fair sister shall partake our throne :  
But for that traitor——

*Arb.* I will die for him ;  
My blood is his, and shall atone his crimes.

*Artax.* Thy loyalty and virtue, injur'd youth,  
Shall change his sentence into banishment :  
Make no reply——his exile is for life.

*Man.* Sure heav'n inspir'd the merciful decree ;  
*Arbaces* and *Semira* must approve it :  
Tho' for his crimes the father justly suffers,  
His life is spar'd, that you his guiltless children  
May not be ever wretched in his death.

## CHORUS.

*Live to us, to empire live,  
Great Augustus, long may'st thou,  
From the subject world receive,  
Laurel wreaths t'adorn thy brow.*

## DUETTO:

*Of his country ever free,  
There the royal father see !*

## CHORUS.

*To the patron of our laws,  
Pierce the air with loud applause.*

## DUETTO.



## DUETTO.

*Virtue in his soul resides ;  
In his truth the world confides.*

## CHORUS.

*To the patron of our laws,  
Pierce the air with loud applause.*



## DUETTO.

*Pity from the throne descending,  
How the monarch it endears ;  
When with justice, mercy blending,  
In the king a god appears.*

## DUETTO.

*Tyrants claim with iron scepter,  
Duty which our fears impart ;  
But our gentle, kind protector,  
Monarch reigns o'er ev'ry heart.*

## CHORUS.

*Live to us, to empire live,  
Great Augustus, long may'st thou,  
From the subject world receive  
Laurel wreaths t'adorn thy brow.*

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